

DROMAIUS VIEILLLOT, 1816 (AVES): PROPOSED ADDITION TO THE
OFFICIAL LIST. Z.N.(S.) 1668

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The purpose of the present application is to ask the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature to conserve the spelling of the generic name *Dromaius* Vieillot, 1816, for the Australian Emu (Class Aves), as against the alternative spelling *Dromiceius*, also used by Vieillot in the same work.

The modern generic name for the Australian Emu was established by Vieillot (1816); on p. 54 he used the spelling *Dromiceius*, but on p. 70, in a list of "Nouveaux Noms, tirés du Grec, qui sont employés dans cette Ornithologie, pour plusieurs tribus, familles et genres," he spelt the name *Dromaius*, and gave its derivation ($\delta\rho\omicron\mu\alpha\iota\omicron\varsigma$, velox).

The spelling *Dromaius* has been adopted by most ornithologists, and almost universally so among Australian ornithologists, *Dromiceius* being considered a misprint.

This was more generally true in the 19th century than in the past three decades of the present century. Vieillot himself used the spelling *Dromaius* in all of his later works (1817, 1825). The main exceptions, those who adopted the spelling *Dromiceius* prior to 1905, were Swainson (1837) and Stephens (1819, 1826). Such authors were castigated by Newton (1896, p. 213, footnote); "The obvious misprint of *Dromeicus* (sic) in this author's work (Analyse &c., p. 54) has been foolishly followed by many naturalists, forgetful that he corrected it a few pages further on (p. 70) to *Dromaius*—the properly latinized form of which is *Dromaeus*".

A renewed attempt to revive *Dromiceius* was made by Oberholser (1905, p. 60) on the grounds that it "can scarcely be considered as a typographical error for *Dromaius*".

Mathews in his earliest works on Australian ornithology (1908, 1910) used the spelling *Dromaius* and in fact, dismissed the alternative spelling as a misprint. In his *Birds of Australia*, vol. 1 (1910, p. 1) in the synonymy of *Dromaius* he has: "*Dromiceius* (misprint) Vieillot," and in a footnote he wrote: "This [*Dromiceius*] was evidently a misprint, as in the same work, on p. 70, he writes *Dromaius* and gives the derivation of that name. As he himself also adopted this latter name in his future writings I have thought it better to adhere to it, and not to the former as suggested by Mr. Oberholser . . ."

Curiously two years later Mathews (1912, p. 175) switched to the spelling *Dromiceius*, and used it in all his subsequent writings. Though the proposal was ignored by almost all Australian ornithologists it was adopted by several extralimital workers who followed the usage of Mathews' numerous series of checklists, and the process was accelerated when the spelling *Dromiceius* was chosen by Peters (1931).

Mathews' first use of *Dromiceius* was in his 1912 list (p. 175) wherein justifying *Dromiceius* he stated: "In the *Birds of Australia* I accepted the spelling *Dromaius* for the genus name; but consistently with my methods as expressed in the *Emu*, vol. x, p. 318 (1910-1911), I must revert to the original *Dromiceius*." However reference to this source will be frustrating to an inquirer, for therein Mathews wrote: "As to the spelling of generic names, I am only accepting the original name as written by its author at its introduction. I have experienced the vagaries of emendation, and also the foibles of the would-be amender, and cannot countenance any correction save such as was made by the author in the same article of work as the name first appeared in." And on the same page he accepts *Dromaius*! "*Dromaius* is the original spelling."

This *volte face* by Mathews took place about the same time, or shortly before, his other deviations from sound nomenclatural and taxonomic practices (Serventy, 1950, p. 261).

Mathews' revised stand in respect to the *Dromaius/Dromiceius* issue was categorically opposed by the Checklist Committee of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union (1926) and in the appendix to the 2nd. edition of the Official Checklist Wolstenholme (1926, p. 120) wrote:

"From its position [page precedence] *Dromiceius* is apparently the correct name. But there are good grounds for thinking it is an error. Vieillot was a good scholar and made good names. *Dromaius* is a good name; *Dromiceius* is not (though there is a Greek word *dromikos*), the ei-part of it being meaningless, unnecessary, and unexplained by Vieillot. Further, *Dromaius* written badly (with the *a* gaping at the top and so resembling *ce*) could quite conceivably be read *Dromiceius* by a printer. Newton calls '*Dromiceius*' an 'obvious misprint'. It has been so treated in the present list."

Apart from Mathews every major author on Australian birds (John Gould, A. J. Campbell, A. J. North, A. H. S. Lucas, W. H. D. Le Souef, J. A. Leach, and N. W. Cayley), has used the spelling, *Dromaius*, and this name appears in all the standard reference books used by bird students and others in Australia.

There seems no need, in the present case, for the Commission to exercise its plenary powers. There are two possible interpretations for the simultaneous introduction of the two names *Dromiceius* and *Dromaius* in the same work. Either they are considered the independent proposal of two names for the same taxon. Vieillot, the author of these names and the first revisor, consistently used *Dromaius* in his subsequent publications, thereby giving unambiguous validity to this name in preference to *Dromiceius*. Or else, one of the two names is considered a misprint or misspelling. Again, Vieillot in his commentary on the Greek derivations of his new names, provides evidence in favour of unequivocal preference for *Dromaius*. The revival of the previously almost universally rejected spelling *Dromiceius* by Mathews seems therefore to have been contrary to the provisions of the Code.

For the reasons set out in this application we ask the International Commission:

- (1) to place the generic name *Dromaius* Vieillot, 1816 (gender : masculine), type-species, by original designation, *Casuarus N. Hollandiae* Latham, 1790, on the Official List of Generic Names in Zoology.

- (2) to place the specific name *novaehollandiae* Latham, 1790, as published in the binomen *Casuarus N. Hollandiae*, on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology.
- (3) to place the following generic names on the Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Generic Names in Zoology:
 - (a) *Dromiceius* Vieillot, 1816 (as an incorrect original spelling);
 - (b) *Dromaeus* Ranzani, 1821 (as an unjustified emendation) (nec *Dromaeus* Billberg, 1820 [Coleoptera]).

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